

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

JAN., 1943

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VOL 4 NO. 1

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY FILM CENTRE 34 SOHO SQUARE LONDON W1

SIXPENCE

IT WON'T BE DONE BY KINDNESS

THE key weakness in most British and American propaganda is that we treat democracy as if it were some kind of almshouse. There is an assumption that after the war we shall be due for a period of convalescence, with administrators adjusting pale pink cushions of new legislation around the sorer quarters of our battered national anatomy. This is to be the reward of victory.

The time has surely come to root out such vague distortions of the thing we are fighting for. The war is moving into its final and most difficult phase. Political problems are beginning to march step by step with military problems. Some people see suspicion growing between the Allied nations, others see the spectre of compromise with fascism becoming clearer and harder in outline. It is no time for sentimentality.

What is the reason for the comfortably impotent conception of democracy with which we are so often fobbed off? It has not happened by accident. Propaganda is seldom accidental. Surely we must face the fact that our picture of democracy is soft and insidious because it is a picture which is intended to deceive. It pretends to delineate a new way of life but in fact does nothing of the kind. It succeeds only in glossing over the deep divisions between social groups within the United Nations, groups which soon will be moving into the open, ready for a battle for which the war against the Axis is only a preliminary skirmish. So it is that *Mrs. Miniver*, *This Above All*, *The War Against Mrs. Hadley*, are manifestations of the spirit which can talk of democracy and treat with Darlan, which can render lip-service to Beveridge and seek feverishly for loopholes through which the financial prestidigitators can find a way out to safety. On the face of it, to suggest a relationship between these slim screen novelettes and the final convulsions of monopoly-capitalism may seem fantastic. Yet the relationship is real. Such films represent a picture of democracy intended to satisfy a public appetite for progress without raising the revolutionary manifestations of progress. Such films seek to persuade us that simply by beating the Axis we shall attain a comfortable, kindly world which will make no more demands upon us than can be satisfied by regular attendance at church, the occasional persual of a book of patriotic quotations and a belief in Father Christmas. The appeal is away from reason towards tradition, blind faith and

mysticism, "Don't think any more," says the parson in *This Above All*, "Follow your faith, not your mind."

Now, as never before in the history of this war, we need to follow our minds. Now is the time really to begin fighting for the things for which we so glibly argue that the war is being fought; and that means that hand in hand with hard fighting must go hard thinking. Now is the time to remember the miseries, frustrations and inept leadership of the pre-war years (if our Government were honest in its protestations that it seeks a new order, it would be making films to remind us that the horrors of peace can equal and even exceed in their apparent hopelessness the horrors of war). Yet, unless we act with courage and speed we shall find that the carrot of a world revolution which has been dangled in front of our noses during the critical military phase of the war will begin to recede into the distance.

The greatest task of film propagandists lies ahead of them and not behind. We must counter the picture of a soft, passive, non-purposive democracy with a picture of democracy as a militant and exacting way of life, a hard road of human progress and not a drawing-room for the airing of good intentions. Grierson has made a beginning in the two first releases in his *Front of Action* series. In *Inside Fighting China* we are told that the Chinese are not asking for "peace in their time but for an opportunity to share in the growth of their country". In *Inside Fighting Russia* we see that the U.S.S.R. is strong because it is possessed by the rational conviction that it can one day achieve Lenin's ideal of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need".

To the production of similarly inspiring films there is bound to be increasing opposition. Even such diffident British films of social struggle as the Films Division of M.O.I. has managed to produce will be increasingly obstructed. We shall be asked to float away from such vulgar brass tacks into the cloud-cuckoo-land of pious social aspiration.

A people is as healthy as the goal to which it is consciously moving. We must present a clear goal for the British people. That is our first duty as propagandists. Our second duty is to describe the path to that distant goal in hard realistic terms and to prevent the grim obstacles ahead from being obscured in a sentimental mist of good intentions.

THE NEW DEMOCRACY

THE year 1943, whether or not it justifies the self-satisfied cries of some of our permanent optimists, is certainly going to be a year in which clashes of ideas and of policy among the Allies will become more intensified. As the prospect of final military victory becomes less and less remote, so the reactionaries will creep out of their hidey-holes or throw off their hastily-assumed masks. It is of urgent importance, therefore, to formulate propaganda policies without delay. This must be done not only by each of the United Nations separately, but also by the United Nations as a body. The events in North Africa alone have proved how necessary is the latter condition.

Never before has there been such an opportunity for the propagandist. The Axis has been and is being increasingly thrown on the defensive in the ideological as well as the military sense. Less is heard of the New Order. And many of Goebbels' more successful lies have now boomeranged back. This does not necessarily mean that German morale is weakening. But it does mean that the whole propaganda front is now ready for a frontal assault by the United Nations—an assault which will be impossible as long as divided counsels prevail. Yet although there may be signs of disagreement between one Government and another, it is unlikely that any disagreement will be found between the peoples they represent, who one and all look to the establishment of at the least a more equitable form of society as a result of the present conflict. Too few of the democratic leaders have so far had the courage, the imagination, and possibly even the goodwill to formulate this strong new movement of common people all over the world into a declared and vigorous policy.

Voice from the U.S.

Highly significant therefore are the utterances of Henry Wallace, Vice-President of the United States. Often he seems like a voice crying in the wilderness. But what he says shows a breadth of vision which is most urgently needed today.

In an article printed by the *Evening Standard* on January 1st, 1943, Wallace challenged the Geopoliticians of the Axis with the vision of a new Heartland. Not Eastern Europe and Western Asia as a centre of world control, but a Heartland "extending from Buenos Aires at the south, on and up through the United States, Canada, Alaska, Siberia, Russia and Western Europe, and including China and India". This, says Wallace, is the heartland of a New Democracy, and he adds: "By the New Democracy I do not mean Anglo-American domination of the world."

This new conception of the Heartland would be an idle fancy (less easily realised than the Haushofer theory of Geopolitik which under Hitler came, in 1941, within measurable distance of success) were it not for the fact that the course of world events has brought it into being. It is not a visionary's dream; it is a thesis based on fact.

Month by month the development of air power illustrates the possibilities. To thousands of pilots the map of the world they live in centres round the North Pole. The Arctic air routes are likely to become a dominating factor in the future of world civilisation. You only have to get a map of suitable projection and see where the direct flying routes of the world now lie. It may not be going too far to say that in the present development of air power lies the key either to the destruction of modern civilisation or to its re-birth. It is at least one of the powerful tools with which the people can carry out their will; and there is little doubt that Wallace's Heartland, dominated by the air-power of the New Democracy, is a nearer picture of a warless world than the marble tombs at Geneva. It is significant

that Wallace examines and, by implication, rejects another aspect of Air Power—one which may be found cogently argued in Seversky's book on the subject in which he visualises world domination by an air force based in the Western Hemisphere and having a striking range of at least 6,000 miles. "In the Air Power world," says Wallace, "America is just as much the heartland of the world as is Eastern Europe." . . . But he adds "We in the United States, while having full respect for geography, can't help wondering if ideas and organisation do not play an even more important part in world destiny."

Wallace's thesis is something which the propagandists should use. It has that appeal of combined fact and imagination which was so clearly seen in the effect of the publication of the Beveridge Report on the people of Britain. It is something not merely said, but meant.

Until the propagandists of the United Nations, severally and in concert, can base their efforts on conceptions as wide and as compelling as these, the final outcome of World War II will remain basically suspect in the minds of the people. And until the Governments of the United Nations act on policies which express the people's determination, the propagandists will be hampered in their work. Every day it becomes clearer that the world of tomorrow is the war-weapon of today, and that, like other weapons, it must be tangible, and not a promissory note. We are more likely to suffer in the long run from lack of social constructiveness than from lack of dive-bombers. In other words, it is vital that the gigantic military onslaught which we are now about to launch on Italy, Germany and Japan shall be backed by a faith which is not blind nor passive, but far-seeing, active, and based on reason. Such a faith is, surely, the secret of Russia's military successes; the lack of it, surely, was the secret of Allied failures in 1940 and 1941.

The geopolitik of Mackinder and Haushofer was nothing until, as Wallace says, Hitler put flesh on its dry bones. Soon its bones will be dry again, for it has proved a false faith. Hitler clothed it with an outworn conception of the State as a mystical body to which the citizen must be subservient. The faith of the New Democracy conceives of the State as the collective and active organisation of the people. It is for that faith that the people are fighting, and it is that faith which the quislings and crypto-quislings of every country will destroy at any cost—even that of self-betrayal.

So there is, even in the present turmoil, when the motives of governments are becoming more and more schizophrenic, when increasing military efficiency and success are matched by increasingly suspicious and reactionary activities in the political field, much that the propagandists can do.

In all their work they can, and must, express an active faith. In each country the conception is of a community totally mobilised for a positive purpose. Problems are positive, not negative. Situations are facts to be dealt with, not mere opportunities for discussion.

Object Lesson

To film makers, a Soviet film like *The New Teacher* is an obvious object lesson on these lines. Here is a picture which reveals the individual, with all his foibles and humanities, in relation to the community. It is a scenario based correctly on the assumption that the individual and the community go together.

Easy for the Russians to express this—they have built a state on this very conception. Not so easy for the British or the

(Continued on next page)

NOTES OF THE MONTH

A Bit of Nonsense

WE ARE indebted to the New York correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* for the following account of a Hollywood wriggling display:—

Mr. Walter Wanger, president of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences, informed me to-day that it was an "outrageous libel" to suggest that the leaders of the American film industry were trying to prevent Noel Coward's film *In Which We Serve* being considered for the Academy's awards for 1942.

Earlier in the day officials of the United Artists Company, which is distributing the picture in the United States, asserted that an effort was being made to "freeze it out".

They explained that the lists were usually closed about January 15th, but this year the date was being changed to December 31st. Since the Coward picture would not open on the West Coast until after January 1st this would have the effect of putting it out of court.

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Americans, who still live under conditions where rugged individualism—be it one man or an imposing corporation enshrined in Victorian Gothic or neo-Georgian concrete—is still no more than slightly cracked in the foundations. True enough, but no excuse. From every side in wartime Britain come evidences of the wider conceptions, from the man who dies in the blitz for the honour of Paradise Street, E.C., to the hundred and one unspectacular evidences of community endeavour in village, city, field and factory, each one of which is, to a greater or lesser degree, a microcosm of the whole idea of an active community.

Today it is the task of the propagandist—and not least of the film propagandist—to gear his work to these very simple conceptions. It is not only a question of smashing the fist into the face of reaction or treachery to the people wherever it is found, but also of presenting every story in the active, positive sense of a community on the march.

It is too late merely to pose, say, the problem of bad factory conditions or Army pay as something to be beefed about first, and then discussed as a problem with various possible solutions. It is not so much the problem which must be posed; it is, rather, the sense of an active community organising itself to meet and solve any and every problem which impedes its progress. All this may, for the time being, be regarded only as an attitude, as a different approach. But that difference of approach is the fresh blood our propaganda needs.

So there are a few New Year resolutions which we must make, and which we must keep:—

1. To express in positive terms the activity of the community.
2. To express the will of the community in terms of a faith based on known facts as well as on a realisation of essential decencies.
3. To seek out not merely the problems, but also the growing points of community activity which in any degree arise from them.
4. To present the International World in terms not of power politics but of the power of the people, whether we call it the New Democracy, New Heartland, or just the United Nations.
5. To fight all attempts to gloss over or explain away episodes or facts which are basically against the interests of the people's war.
6. To remember that our work deals with human beings, not blueprints; and that each human being must become a member of an active community, or perish.

Mr. Wanger said: "I would certainly like to see *In Which We Serve* among the pictures of the year considered by the Academy for awards. I saw it in New York and I think it is a great picture and one that is eligible for all the awards we have.

"But it is not our fault if it is not shown here in time to be included among the pictures of 1942.

"It is true that in the past we have sometimes included films shown as late as January 15th, but it is not true that the proposal to make December 31st the dead line was made with a view to excluding this particular picture. It has merely been decided that the end of the year is the most logical date on which to terminate the year."

"To this United Artists replied that they were not informed until Friday night that pictures not shown before December 31st would not be accepted"

Housing Problems

A STRIKING demonstration of the wide current interest in social questions is provided by the distribution figures of the British Commercial Gas Association film library. Like other non-theatrical libraries, the collection of Gas Industry films (which includes several documentaries on sociological subjects) has since the outbreak of war experienced an increased demand which now exceeds the available supply of copies. During this period the order of popularity of the films has changed and it is somewhat surprising to find that the film most sought after today is *Housing Problems*. This film record of slum life in the East End of London and about the steps which must be taken to deal with the social evil was made as long ago as 1935 in the first year of major Gas Industry production and has since been shown all over the world. The situation it deals with has now changed, but the fact that schools, colleges, civil defence, adult educational and Service groups are anxious to see a film of this description is heartening evidence of the widespread desire to ensure that the post-war world will not see a repetition of pre-war miseries.

Eric Knight

THE LATE Eric Knight's many friends in the Documentary Movement will wish to join us in recording our sharp sense of the loss of a staunch ally and in expressing our deep sympathy to his widow. We quote from *The Times* obituary:

"Major Eric Knight was killed on January 15th, when a transport aeroplane in which he was travelling crashed off the coast of Dutch Guiana. Born in Yorkshire in 1897, Eric Knight spent most of his life in the United States. But until he wrote his best-selling work, *This Above All* (which was later made into a film), it was for books about Yorkshire that he was chiefly famous on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly *Song On Your Bugles* and *The Flying Yorkshireman*. Eric Knight served in the last war with the Canadian Army, and in the years that followed gained an unrivalled reputation in America as film critic on the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, for which he worked between 1925 and 1935. In this war he had for the nine months preceding his death been working in the Film Unit of the United States Army. His death has deprived both the United States and Britain of a tireless worker for good relations between the two countries. He wrote the booklet which is given to members of the American Forces who come to Britain, and when he was over in this country last year he wrote at the request of the Ministry of Information the story for a film stressing the need for the international planning of food resources. . . ."

LETTER FROM NEW ZEALAND

A new growing point for Documentary

by *E. S. Andrews, Producer for the National Film Unit of New Zealand*

SURVEYING his countrymen from the dispassionate heights of a Carnegie grant, a New Zealander once said that we were a nation of inspired amateurs, that we were so universally capable of building fowl-houses and improvising machinery that we looked on experts with an unwise contempt. Rapid wartime expansion of industry has wiped out any trace of contempt for expert craftsmen, and at the same time has given play to the fresh mindedness and adaptability of the amateur. Witness the New Zealand National Film Unit.

The Government Tourist Department's film staff used to make the prettiest sceneries imaginable. But war cut the overseas tourist trade to the bone, and the Government Film Studios staff was whittled down to an unarticulated skeleton. By August 1942, necessity, economy and some persistent argument had re-created the Studios into the likeness of the National Film Unit, set up specially to discover New Zealand to New Zealanders, and to inform them about their own war effort.

From national habit, administrative machinery was improvised. The Studios and remaining technical staff belonged to the Tourist Department, so new staff became a charge on that Department, which pays the bills in the first instance and attends to administrative details. Direction of effort must come from the Cabinet, so the Director of Publicity in the Prime Minister's Department is ultimately responsible for the general line of war publicity followed by the Unit. Creative initiative must come from within, so the Unit hatches its own plots with a minimum of outside direction.

War Expenses

Since the cost, including new equipment, is booked out to Hitler and Tojo via the War Expenses account and the Tourist Department finds itself with a tidy asset in full running order; since the Prime Minister's Department gets the kind of output it needs from a thoroughly efficient outfit; and since the Unit staff have a measure of professional freedom unusual in a Government Department, the National Film Unit works in a pretty happy atmosphere.

We have a producer, a studio manager, a production supervisor, a chief cameraman, a soundman, two complete three-man units, of director, assistant and cameraman, and a small laboratory staff. We are also lucky enough to have on call a carpenter, a model maker and three artists, with a woodwork shop that in its time built the Government Court at the Centennial Exhibition. There is a "still" processing department which handles all the processing of official war photographs, and lends us a hand when needed. Two of us were journalists, one was a programme man from radio, one a clerk in the public service, one a commercial artist. There were, and still are, abysmal gaps in our equipment, some of which is first class, and some of

which we had to improvise. But we started out on the assumption that, knowing what we wanted to say, we could find a way to say it. We did find a way, though not without sweat and headaches.

Transition Difficulties

The task the Government set was to produce a weekly four-minute potted newsreel, and a monthly one-reeler which would give room for more considered statement. We slapped right into the job when we were so rawly new that for weeks we would notice faces round the place that we didn't recognise. We did not fully understand, thank goodness, what a handicap it was to be without an optical printer, without a re-recording outfit, without even a moviola. We just literally cut our way through transition difficulties and last week put "60th Week" on our newsreel titles. The one-reelers now add up to eighteen.

For having done the job it set out to do, the National Film Unit is reasonably satisfied with its activities, and audiences like the films. But every time we look at a newly finished print we feel that the next one is going to have just that extra something. It usually has, though we never find ourselves satisfied.

We are compelled to be brief in the weeklies, and commonsense and settled policy have made us omit any direct appeals to audiences. Our job is to give information pithily and interestingly, in the belief that an ounce of information is worth a ton of disembodied exhortation. Wartime industrial changes have given us a limitless field of interest. Workshops and workmen all over the country have proved times out of number that the impossible could be done. Unusual patterns of industry have developed, notably the co-ordination of scattered metal, lathes and drills, in garages and blacksmiths' shops from top to bottom of the Islands, as feeders for a central depot assembling armoured fighting vehicles. Our country in fact, is the review editor's heaven, with a novelty of social or industrial importance in every street.

John Grierson said three years ago that nobody had ever seen the New Zealander's face on the screen. Now we have all had a good look at ourselves, and we like it well enough to have started a mounting flow of film to Britain, Australia, America and the Middle East. Not the least of the Unit's contributions to international goodwill is its frequent visual presentation of the fact that men and women in machine-shops, farms and offices look the same in New Zealand as they do in Great Britain, in Russia, in America, and in every other country that has put the face of its people on the screen. We have in some measure romanticised ourselves. This is a beautiful country and we have shown it so. To the New Zealander, the brush, the scrub, the lakes and mountains are the outward symbol of freedom. They are flavoured with holiday

memories, of warm summer days fishing, love-making and lazing, of doing what he damn well pleases in his Christmas leave. In Grierson's phrase we are polynesian romantics, and we like it so much that way that we would fight off the whole world to keep it.

That is why the National Film Unit has missed no opportunity of making the visual contrast between these and quieter times. The holiday resorts are training grounds for soldiers; there are munition factories where the snow meets the tussock; timber itself is a defence industry. All that, along with the men and women in uniform and in factory overalls and farming dungarees, is up there on the screen to see.

The National Film Unit did this simply, sometimes almost naively in the first twelve months while it was learning to be national, learning about film and learning to be a unit. Of necessity the films have had a parochial tinge. We had no library material from other parts of the world; our only overseas camera unit was fixed with the N.Z.E.F. in the Middle East; we had, above all, to convince local audiences that they and their affairs were fit subjects for filming. Now, with the self-conscious stages in ourselves and our audiences quickly receding, we aim to fit New Zealand into the pattern of World War II and the more hopeful pattern that will grow out of it.

For Home Use

In the main, our product will continue to be for home consumption, but we are sending an increasing number of films to other Dominions and especially to Great Britain; partly as Empire stock-shot material and partly for use in complete form.

An important subsidiary to the production side is the embryo National Film Library, mainly 16 mm., which was set in motion in August this year. Housed in the Government Film Studios, operating as a free library, and co-ordinating the film activities of the Education Department and the Office of the United Kingdom High Commissioner, the new organisation already has met with a demand which far exceeds supply. Ministry of Information films from Great Britain, a few from Canada, some from the Indian Film Unit, 16 mm. copies of local productions, and some educational films reserved for school use constitute most of the stock. We have discovered in the vaults a few New Zealand primitives, Grierson's *Drifters*, Flaherty's *Moana*, and a hotch-potch collection of last-war negative.

As this is written, the major problem is to find enough prints of anything to satisfy what appears to be a national craving for 16 mm. film, but as stocks creep up to full level, more consideration will be given to programme preparation and to instruction in the use of films for various purposes.

All told, we feel that after a slow but very early start, New Zealand has settled down to a thorough appreciation of the value of films to the community.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Lift Your Head, Comrade. Director: Michael Hankinson. Producer: Basil Wright. Script: Arthur Koestler. Production: Spectator Short Films. M.O.I. 13 minutes.

Subject: German and Austrian anti-fascists who are now working in the Pioneer Corps.

Treatment: Koestler wrote it—therefore one takes it for granted that the subject is treated as a refugee would wish. Hankinson directed and he presumably saw to it that he got the people he wanted to play the British parts. Wright produced and he is no "Let's crack it out by the end of the week boys" producer; neither is he noted for insensitivity. Why then does this film which could have moved audiences throughout the country—which does indeed move them intensely in parts—lock as though it were made by Fitzpatrick after a brief tour of Dachau?

The treatment of the subject is simple enough. We are taken to the Headquarters of a Pioneer Unit as the men are parading. A British-sergeant-major starts to call the roll but is unable to pronounce the difficult names because they are foreign. He calls to an N.C.O. to come and read "This bloody list". (Bloody indeed it is, for it contains the names of many Germans and Austrians—men who have been through Dachau—men who have escaped from the terror of being a Jew or a Trade Unionist in a Fascist land, to come and fight for the cause of freedom.) This gets a quick laugh but it is a laugh with a sting in it because the sergeant-major is like all the old jokes you ever heard about nasty sergeant-majors.

Now the Major appears and takes up the story. No doubt the particular Major chosen is good to little children, fond of animals and altogether extremely kind, wise and progressive. Unfortunately the camera has come between us and this ideal personality and turned him into something very different. His behaviour is between that of a circus ring-master and the Victorian head of a reformatory. He takes us round the camp and introduces us to the work the men are doing and gets them to tell us something of their past history. Their stories, so tragically common to the past twelve years of Nazi history, still have the power of stirring one to primitive anger and hatred. And the fact that these men are still able to continue their long struggle renews one's faith in humanity. We see some of the work they do—building camps, constructing coastal defences and manning the guns while they make ready for the Artillery to take over. In a moving sequence we see reconstructed the great moment when these men, aliens in a strange land, were first given arms. As long as the film sticks to the men it is good propaganda, good movie making and full of that courage and inspiration without which the best propaganda is dead.

The men look after their side of the film so I think we must blame the choice of the British personnel for making nonsense of their message. Nobody, least of all the men themselves, would expect to be wrapped in cottonwool, but it can surely not have been necessary to produce caricatures of British soldiers as their officers. Fortunately they are unbelievable caricatures so we can assume that one of those special distorting lenses

was used; you know, the kind that can make a Nazi Youth parade look like a message of hope for the future, or a service in a bombed country church like a bad farce.

Propaganda Value: This is difficult to assess. On the whole it will probably be good. Some people will not notice the strange twist given by the handling of the officers and will only see a good and encouraging message for the future of world co-operation. Those who do notice it will probably be able to discount it. One good thing is that the film is bound to raise a lot of points which will be discussed, such as anti-Semitism, treatment of the enemy after the war and the shape of the peace to come. In all the thousands of feet of celluloid which are so happily forgotten as soon as one steps from the cinema into the black-out, this is one reel which will have made its mark and be remembered.

Kill or Be Killed. Realist Films. Producer: John Taylor. Direction: Len Lye. Camera: E. Jeakins. 2 reels.

Subject: Stalking a sniper.

Treatment: A party of British soldiers are laying mines in the open. Hidden in a tree some way away is a German sniper who is picking them off one by one. A sergeant sets out to find the sniper and kill him. The film is the story of his hunt, a hunt to the death, and it is without doubt one of the most exciting films ever made. In these two reels there is more suspense than we have seen on the screen for years. First sergeant hunts German, then the rôles are reversed and German hunts sergeant, then hunter again becomes hunted. Across fields, by hedges and into a wood, every move made by either side becoming a matter of life or death for the audience. One wants to cheer when the German gives his first position away by a careless use of his field glasses and one's eyes, becoming the sergeant's eyes, ache from peering into the chequered shadows of the wood. When the German treads on a twig the resulting crack is as great a shock as though a bomb had fallen from an empty sky. There is no commentary, but the thoughts of both hunter and hunted are spoken, one by a Scots voice, the other in English with a German intonation, and this device adds enormously to the tension. Here warfare is reduced to a primitive, man to man, contest, in which the colour of a leaf, the sudden movement of a horse, the keenness of one's eyes or ears, may mean life or death. Your life or his.

The sergeant eventually kills the German and then, using the dead body as a grotesque decoy, picks off the members of a scouting party as they come up to investigate.

The film has the very magic of cinema in it, every legitimate device has been used with an integrity which is rare in film making. The film is for theatrical release in America, but unfortunately, only for non-theatrical circulation in this country. It is well worth your while to hunt it out—that is if you don't mind being shaken up, frightened and fascinated.

Propaganda Value. Excellent. One of the best shorts turned out by the Ministry of Information.

Worker and War Front. Number Three. M.O.I. Non-theatrical.

Subject: A fortnightly magazine of various items relating to the war effort.

Treatment. It is sometimes a little difficult to understand exactly what these magazines are getting at. They are not particularly entertaining nor are they very instructive. Neither are they particularly boring being mostly well shot and edited. They have rather the same effect as those routine items in the daily press which one usually only reads on a long train journey like "More Carrots Being Eaten", "Mother of Twelve Works Night Shift" or "Carraway Seed Collectors Go To It". In this issue we are told, among other things, that the dockers are doing a damn good job, that the railings are being taken down round the squares, but that unless we behave ourselves they will be put back after the war, and finally Ben Lyon, Bebe Daniels and Vic Oliver appear in a rather inept tail piece. It would possibly be a help if the commentary was dramatised to make up for the lack of news value. Or again it might be possible to find slightly more unusual subjects to film.

Propaganda Value. Difficult to assess but to see one of these films during a showing in a factory might quite easily prove all the above remarks to be entirely wrong.

Tank Battle. Production: Army Film Unit. Commentator: Raymond Glendinning. Running Time: 12 minutes. M.O.I. Home Theatrical.

Subject: This film is apparently designed to show what happens on the battlefield in a clash between two opposing tank forces.

Treatment: The film postulates a situation arising during manoeuvres. British defending forces become aware that a German Panzer force will attempt to break through their lines and capture a strategic point. We see councils of war take place on both sides and we see the Nazi force decide upon a particular stratagem whilst the British C.O. deploys his defending units to meet all likely contingencies. Out in the field we see the tanks lumbering about and then a surprise German move reported in the nick of time by a British reconnaissance party, with the result that the quick-witted Commander at headquarters correctly interprets the stratagem and proceeds to forestall it. He sends two converging columns of British tanks to intercept the Nazi force and defeat it.

It is conceivable that the tactics employed in these exercises are militarily sound, but the general effect remains dismally unconvincing. In some directions meticulous care has been taken to ensure accuracy but for the most part the troops behave as if it were a spare-time frolic. No attention is paid to the almost certain intervention of forces other than tank forces.

Propaganda Value: Very low. From the line of the film it is impossible to guess for what type of audience it was designed and one is left with the depressing conclusion that it was designed for no audience-type whatsoever.

New Documentary Films *(continued)*

B.B.C. Brains Trust. *Production:* Strand Film Co. *Producers:* Donald Taylor and Howard Thomas. *Camera:* Jo Jago, Charles Marlborough, Hal Young, Moray Grant. *Editor:* Alan Osbiston. *Subject:* A film version of the broadcast feature. *Treatment:* With great commercial nous, Strand Films has set up four cameras in front of the Brains Trust table and persuaded Question-master McCullough, Joad, Huxley, Jenny Lee, Elliott and Campbell to go through their B.B.C. studio motions as un-selfconsciously as if there were not a single prying eye to watch their frowning, pouting and malicious outbursts of glee. All these speakers are in characteristic form and the fact that they are somewhat more fluent than usual and that we have to suffer fewer stupidities than find their way over the air, probably is because advantage has been taken of the opportunity to edit the material. The answers are, however, spontaneous and unprepared and audiences will be fascinated by the whole lively business. There is no doubt that the Brains Trust is more entertaining if it is seen as well as heard—particularly when the visible reactions of members are as eloquent as in this first release. A critic in the Sunday Press has suggested that in this automatic objective reporting style we have the lowest form of film making. It appears that the writer would have preferred the director to interpret the answers with his camera and to have intervened with his own personal reactions to what is said. Surely most people will prefer to find no anonymous personality coming between them and the members of the Trust. Moreover, any film-maker with experience in handling this kind of shooting will understand that to get rid completely of all camera-consciousness, even in the case of such distinguished non-professionals as the members of the Brains Trust, is in itself a considerable feat of film-making.

Propaganda Value: This series obviously will provide an important forum for the discussion of topical problems. In the first release there is a tendency to pull punches and in a discussion about Left and Right in politics there is an attempt to preserve an artificial balance between the two sides. Unless this tendency is quickly scotched the value of the whole series will be seriously weakened. The discussions become meaningless unless every point of view can be put fearlessly without afterthoughts about its effect in interested quarters.

Worker and Warfront, No. 4: One reel. M.O.I. *Subject:* Magazine film for factories.

Treatment: This series has taken on a new lease of life. Where before it was ineffectual and irritating it is now lively and entertaining. This issue deals with building an aerodrome, making camouflage nets, testing recipes for the Food Facts advertisements, and the delights of an evening at the All-Services Clubs. The aerodrome sequence is very tough and exciting, the camouflage sequence, although more conventional, carries its weight, the Food Fact was interesting (even if the thing which they made and ate with such relish sounded pretty dreary) and the soldiers' night out was novel and gay. Colin Wills doesn't seem to be the ideal commentator, anybody from another country is almost bound to give the impression that he is visiting a well-run zoo, but he carries the thing along well enough.

Propaganda value: Good entertaining stuff with war interest value.

**FILMS OF GREAT BRITAIN LIMITED**

FOR

U. S. S. R.**"Milk and Science"**

FOR

CANADA**"Medical Aid for Britain"**

FOR

THE EAST**"Motive Power"****"Movement"****"Flight"****"Water Travel"**

FOR

BRITAIN**"Cereal Seed Disinfection"****"Welding Agricultural Machinery"****"Technical Education"****"Flight in the Future"**

PARK STUDIO
PUTNEY PARK LANE
S.W.15. PUTNEY 6274.

Managing Director:
ANDREW BUCHANAN

FILM BOARD OF CANADA

Programme of production and distribution rapidly expands

(from *Business Screen* Oct. 1942)

IN a war which is total or nothing the Canadian Government, through its National Film Board is producing documentary war films whose hard-hitting realism has broken with the accepted motion picture formula as completely as the Nazis broke with the Maginot mind.

Contrasted with the traditional caution of governmental enterprises, and their instinct for dealing gingerly with major issues, Government Film Commissioner John Grierson and Director Stuart Legg are turning out a brand of fighting front films which leave no doubt whatsoever that their objective is to jolt Canadian motion picture audiences next to the grim realities of war. In few other countries has any department of government permitted itself to view facts so realistically or to hammer them home so hard. That the method has succeeded is proved by the fact that National Film Board pictures now enjoy international circulation and have been ranked among the best war-reporting jobs so far produced by any of the United Nations.

The war series, *Canada Carries On* and *The World in Action*, circulate theatrically on an ordinary commercial basis. Speaking of the *Canada Carries On* series before the National Board of Review in New York on November 13th, 1941, Grierson remarked, "We said from the first that we were not giving it away. We were selling it commercially because if it was good, it was good enough to sell commercially, and if it wasn't good enough to sell commercially, we weren't any more interested in it than the industry. In other words we decided to put our work on a normal basis and use that as a yardstick of our success in public information."

In Canada the *Canada Carries On* series, made in co-operation with the Public Information Division of the Department of National War Services (now being replaced by the Wartime Information Board), plays 900 or ninety per cent of Canadian theatres, seventy of them French. Regular French versions are made of each monthly release.

John Grierson was convinced from the outbreak of war that the United Nations must tell their story with all the dynamics of public information geared to total war and that the process must be international or not at all.

How far this purpose has been achieved by the Canadian documentary film can be judged by the fact that the *World in Action* series is distributed throughout the United States, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa and the Latin Americas, where sound tracks are translated into Spanish and Portuguese. Since April, 1940, the National Film Board has been producing one theatrical two-reel war film a month, and since April, 1942, it has produced two. Theatre releases also include weekly news-clips, novelty trailers on government campaigns and a French language news-reel entitled *Les Actualites Olympiques*.

Through long experience in the fields of education and propaganda, Grierson has never fallen into the error of underrating these weapons

in the hands of the enemy nor the consummate skill with which the Nazis have learned to use them. He has consistently held that the only defence lies in attack and that to achieve victory the United Nations must state their faith in stronger terms than the enemy. It is this actuality approach to film-making, coupled with a long-range view of the film as an instrument of public education, that has endowed Canadian documentaries with their tough core of realism, their blunt refusal to treat with any emotion less comforting than the truth.

In Canada, government film production and distribution is centralised under authority of the National Film Board which in turn looks after the film interests of all government departments. The Board includes two government ministers, three senior civil servants and three members of the public chosen for their interest in and knowledge of the films as an instrument of public policy.

Although less widely known than *Canada Carries On* and *The World in Action* war films, the National Film Board's 16 millimetre production plan has been expanding steadily over the past two years. In addition to films on school subjects and adult education this now includes wartime economies and special films made for key government departments such as Munitions and Supply, Wartime Prices and Trade Board, General Post Office, Labour, the Civilian Director of Recruiting, the Director General of Aircraft, the Army, Navy and R.C.A.F. and the Department of National Defence.

Non-theatrical distribution in Canada is carried out mainly through twenty regional libraries set up throughout the nine provinces. In the more thickly populated regions of Ontario and Quebec there are as many as four film libraries. Through these libraries both war and educational films are available on a loan or purchase basis. At the end of six months of theatre showing, films in the *Canada Carries On* series are reduced to 16 millimetre and become available for schools, camps, clubs, churches, or any other community organisation that wishes to put on a programme.

As a teaching medium the film in Canada is proving an instrument of flexibility and range. It can and does instruct the army in tactics and arms, demonstrates the use of preventive medicine, first aid and A.R.P., teaches the use of precision tools and is introducing new approaches to history, social studies and art. Planned for future production are films dealing with agriculture, housing, health, medicine, nutrition, social welfare and other branches of public service.

As interpreter of Canada to Canadians themselves the documentary film is showing how much in the past they have looked at, yet never truly seen. Northwest the colour camera has explored the rich Peace River district of British Columbia; in *Great Lakes* brought back a record of Canada's inland water-ways and the powerful flow of their lake-borne traffic. It has followed

the Indian trapper into the Northland and caught the *habitant* farmer of Quebec as, with horse and sleigh, he starts out through the woods to tap the sugar bush.

Settlement in Canada is widely scattered, with many communities living far outside theatre range. To include such isolated communities the National Film Board, in co-operation with the Director of Public Information and the Canadian Council for Education in Citizenship, established in January 1942 a project for thirty 16-millimetre travelling theatres. The object of these rural circuits was two-fold. First to bring people in remote settlements into visual contact with war and secondly to stimulate greater knowledge of and interest in current events among foreign language groups.

By June, 1942, the original thirty travelling theatres had increased to forty-seven with a monthly audience of more than 280,000; an audience scattered all the way from Vancouver Island, British Columbia, to the fishing villages of Nova Scotia.

Non-theatrical distribution of National Film Board pictures abroad is carried out by means of film libraries established in the offices of Canadian representatives. Considerable circulation of Canadian films is also secured through the British Ministry of Information's film library. In the United States, 16 millimetre distribution is handled in part through prints deposited with the Canadian Government Trade Commissioner in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, and by more than one hundred film libraries.

A number of films have been placed in the United States with libraries on an extended loan basis similar to that employed by the Office of War Information.

SIGHT and SOUND

WINTER ISSUE OUT

Some Contributors:

ELSPETH GRANT

FORSYTH HARDY

PATRICK MEREDITH

6d.

Published by: The British Film Institute,
4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1.

STORY TELLING AMONG FILM WORKERS

An art that has become a tradition in the industry.

THE film business is a young and rowdy affair—something like a newly discovered goldfield. There are still no brick or stone-built houses—there is no sanitation—the only bathroom is in the brothel—there are no schools, and vigilantes are still a necessity. Slowly though, this fifty year old Klondyke is maturing—making its own taboos and customs and traditions and among the more pleasant is a tradition of story telling. It is not a conscious art—a cameraman may have been away somewhere and when he gets back to his local pub or camera-room he tells of the things he has seen and heard. If the story goes down well he tells it again to other people and more or less unconsciously works it up, enlarges the best sections and gets the timing straight until it is tight and pat.

Cameramen for some reason are among the best story tellers; one thing common to quite a lot of them is the use of action to put a story over. At 7 o'clock in any pub close to a cameraman's headquarters, you are almost bound to see three or four men standing round while another ducks, pulls faces and waves his hands as he tells his story.

One of the best story tellers is Robert Flaherty. He needed quiet and a certain amount of drink and a few short stories to start him off, and drawing forward—he liked leaning on the table with both arms with his feet tucked back, toes pointing down, on either side of the chair—he would go off on a long detailed story of a man he met in an igloo on Cape Wolstenholme, or the Chinese cook or the Captain and four mounted policemen on a derelict schooner. One story he had in 1938 was of an Englishman named R. Q. Nelson, and it started early one morning on a tennis court in Hollywood. Ben-Hecht, Charlie MacArthur and his wife Helen Hayes were down to have a game before going to the studios. Their fourth failed to turn up and after waiting around for a while they saw a young chap sitting on one of the benches. He was neatly dressed, but looked as if he had spent the night in the park, and at last they went up and asked him if he played tennis, and if he did, could he spare the time to have a game. He was a quiet young chap, English, his name was R. Q. Nelson, and he did play and he would be very pleased to make up a four if they had a spare racket. After the game, Nelson was invited back to breakfast and he told them his story. He was a clerk and had been working in an oil company office further down the coast until the Mexicans had taken over the oilfields or something like that and since then he had been unemployed. Hecht and MacArthur thought that it shouldn't be too difficult to get him a job at the studio. What did he think he could do? Nelson didn't think he could do anything very much connected with films. He hadn't even seen many. The one job he really knew was book-keeping. It was promptly decided that if he really didn't know anything about films at all and had seen very few, the best and only job for him was writing.

Later that morning Hecht passing a studio executive said: "Morning, Sol—d'you hear R. Q. Nelson's in town?" to which Sol, not being a full-blown executive by any means and only a fifth cousin of the boss, replied carefully:

"Oh, is he, what's he going to do?"

"Nothing particular," said Hecht. "He's out to have a holiday and see some of his friends."

And careful Sol said: "One minute, Ben, it's slipped my memory for a moment, what does Nelson do?"

And cunning, horrified Ben replied: "Do!" Do you mean to say you've forgotten his London productions?"

"Of course not. I remember now," Sol said. "I remember some of his stuff was on when I was over there last year, but I never got time to see them."

And as Hecht passed on he dropped the first seed. "You know a man like Nelson might come in very useful to the studio—a writer like him who's had nothing to do with films might get some fresh angles."

Later that day Hecht told the same story this time to a bigger shot than careful Sol, but with very much the same results except Hal's first reaction was:

"Who the hell is R. Q. Nelson?"

But on thinking he too remembered the well-known English writer. So the story went the rounds. Hecht and MacArthur gave it plenty of time and it finally ended at the producers' weekly conference. Sol had not been much in favour recently—at any other time he would not have bothered much, but the financial people had their representatives in the studio trying to cut down overheads and quite a few of his relatives had had to find other offices to sleep in and some of them, especially the ones who hadn't bothered to learn English, were finding it very difficult. Sol suggested that it might be a good idea if they could get R. Q. Nelson to co-operate on the next epic—that is if he could be persuaded, but to the usual question—"Who is—?" came a chorus of the usual answer, and the big man side-stepping said,

"Of course. Yes, it's not a bad idea at all."

Next day Mr. Nelson was requested to lunch in the big man's private room. Hecht and MacArthur coached him that night. Their instructions were very simple,

"Just don't say anything but 'Yes' or 'No'."

Hecht took Nelson in to the big man hoping that he might get an invitation too, and be able to give a hand in any difficulties, but it was obvious that Mr. Nelson was an important person and studio writers were not admitted.

Well, everything went quite well. Nelson didn't say anything more than "Yes" or "No". The big man was delighted with him and even took him on a personally conducted tour of the studio and later suggested politely that "everybody would be extremely obliged if Mr. Nelson could take say six months off from his own extremely important work to give them his advice on a few stories". Then and then only did everything nearly break down. Nelson thought that the joke had gone far enough, but he couldn't just call it off and possibly get his new friends into a jam. When the big man ended up with—

"We could pay you a salary of say 450 dollars a week," Nelson really decided it was time he

was moving. Desperate he had a bright idea.

"I'd like to very much. I've always wanted to work in films, but I have definite commitments and I must be back in London before the end of next month."

But the big man wasn't to be denied. The offer rose to 550 then 650 and then 750, and Nelson was so dazed that before he knew what had happened, he was out of the office and on the way home with Hecht, and the contract was following in the next day's post.

Briefed before starting work by his three friends, the advice was exactly the same as before—nothing but "Yes" or "No" or "Nice weather", and above all "Don't put anything down on paper."

During the next few months Hecht and MacArthur had another of their battles with the studio and finally ended up in New York and that was the last they heard of R. Q. Nelson for a long time. They had been extremely careful not to tell even their best friends the story and they themselves had more or less forgotten it when one day about two years later a friend named Peter Freuchen, an explorer and author, arrived. He was just back from a visit to Hudson's Bay for one of the major studios and it came out in the course of the evening that he had been sent up to help an Englishman named R. Q. Nelson.

So for two years Nelson had managed to keep quiet and every week 750 golden dollars had been placed respectfully on his desk. Far more amazing still was that when Freuchen had suggested flying from Hollywood to Hudson's Bay the studio had stopped it and said that they could not take the risk with a man like Mr. Nelson and they had solemnly gone by train. Hecht asked him how he had got on with Nelson, and Freuchen said he found him a pleasant enough young chap—rather quiet, but good enough company once they had got friendly.

Time passed again and just over a year later Freuchen arrived in New York again and during the talk he said he had just come through Hollywood, and among others he had seen Nelson, who seemed to be getting on all right, and had asked him to read quite a good story he had written—but Freuchen did not think it was the kind of story that would appeal to the studios and he had advised Nelson that the best place for it would be a good magazine.

Well time went on, another year and a half and Hecht and MacArthur had produced *Crime without Passion*, and were back again in Hollywood. Soon after they arrived they decided to look up their brain child, but when they rang the studios they were told that Mr. Nelson wasn't there any more. Looking through the telephone book they found him at a number well outside Hollywood and finally they all met and the end of the story was cleared. For four years Nelson had stayed at the studio and the only work he had done was the story that Freuchen had seen. He had kept it in his drawer until he could stand it no longer and had sent it in to the big man... there was no reply, but they had not renewed his option at the end of the year. But in a lot of ways he was glad. He had saved most of his 750 a week and with it had got his wife and children out from England and had bought a very nice ranch about 50 miles from Hollywood at which they would all always be welcome.

SOVIET SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTIONAL FILMS

ONE important point in the background of Soviet Scientific and Technical films should be noted by the Western reader. There are of course no distribution difficulties. There is no question of making a film for a given audience, and then not getting access to it; if for the public, because no renter will handle it, or theatres won't show it; if for an educational purpose, because the lecture theatres or factories, etc., lack projection apparatus. The Soviet picture made would be part of a planned output and get its chance. No one would make films to teach, say, engineering, without an adequate screen network to reach engineers (or secondary school pupils, or whatever) being simultaneously planned. That is why the authors of the sketch printed here have treated the question as simply a production problem, a theme problem.

The present is not an original article, nor an exact translation, but the digest of a chapter with the above title written by S. Beskov, I. Vasilyev and L. Ryabinin and included in "Twenty Years of Soviet Cinematography", published by the State Publishing House, U.S.S.R., 1940. Three notes have been added by Ivor Montagu.

Very soon after the nationalisation of the film industry in 1920, Lenin urged that film propaganda should be used to help the organisation of production. On the instruction of Lenin, and under the supervision of an Engineer named Klasson, two films were made on the hydraulic method of obtaining peat—one portraying familiar methods of peat work and the other the use of a peat pump. These were the first technical-instructional films made in the Soviet Union.

By 1925 already a number of popular-scientific and technical-instructional films had been produced. A list of some titles will indicate the types of subjects.

Medical-Biological: *Fatigue and the Struggle Against It, The Problem of Nutrition, Abortion, The Mechanism of the Brain, The Truth about Life, Tuberculosis, Labour and Health, Alcohol, First Aid in Accidents.*

Other Spheres of Knowledge: *Earth and Cloud, Sound, Chemical Weapons, In Europe, Pages from the History of "Pravda".*

At this time there was no very clear idea of the nature of the scientific film. Too often story elements would be introduced to hold the audience's attention, and the teaching content would be thrust into the background or the theme vulgarised. Only the externals of a given process would be shown. There was not profound enough depiction, in films of mechanisms, of the interdependence of their parts, the rationalisation of technical processes and production associated with them. The main weakness, however, was that they were not planned for a definite auditorium, there was no differentiation of groups of spectators. Films were not, for example, produced specially for

workers in a given speciality, or for secondary school pupils, or higher technical school or university students.

(NOTE. 1.)

Three films from this period have been in England. *Neurasthenia*, a film of the type criticised above for being based on story elements, was brought over for a Medical Congress, but, owing to various difficulties, not exhibited. *Mechanism of the Brain*, directed by Pudovkin, a beautiful and lyrical introduction to the subject, designed for serious audiences of non-specialists, was shown at the Film Society; and *Struggle for Life*, a popular audience nature picture illustrative of its title, was generally exhibited.)

With the opening of the first Stalin Five-Year Plan there was a great increase in the attention to such films. A special department for their production was set up in one of the feature film studios. But this was soon found insufficient. A special technical production base became essential.

In 1932-33 three Scientific and Technical Film Studios were started—in Moscow, Leningrad and Novosibirsk respectively—exclusively for the production of scientific and technical instructional films. This for the first time gave the possibility of adequately perfecting the complex and peculiar technique appropriate to such films, e.g. animation of diagrams, speeding-up and slowing-down movement micro- and macro-photography. It also enabled the working out of a methodology suited to filming in workshops, on rail transport, on collective farms, etc.

Following the historic decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on schools, dated 5th September, 1931, and 25th August, 1932, the way was cleared for the development of special films for teaching in schools. Both technical and teaching staffs engaged on production of such films were increased, with excellent results.

4,000 Cultural Films

Among a whole series of films produced especially for secondary schools during this time were: *Salt, Lightning, Rain, Treasures of the Forests, Irrigation*. In similar fashion many films were produced for raising the general level of labour skill, for attainment of a minimum technical knowledge in each field, for technical schools and for universities.

In all, during the period of production of scientific and technical and instructional films, over 4,000 items have been produced. These constitute of course a rich storehouse of Socialist culture.

A great drawback from which such films suffered, however, was the casual and insufficiently co-ordinated choice of themes. Government decrees dated 23rd March and 27th November, 1938, prescribing a basic reorganisation of scientific film production, initiated systematic selection of subjects. The balance

of the output of subjects was placed under the Film Affairs Committee—the Government organ charged with supervision of the whole Soviet cinema. More attention to the literary qualities of scenarios, improved conditions of work, new methods of rewarding work—all these led to great improvements which have been very marked in the course of the last two years. It will be well here to list examples of the product resulting:

Prof. V. N. Lebedev and his group, who specialised in micro- and macro-photography, have made: *Bacteria, Green Algae, Pathogenic Protozoa, the Structure of Vegetable Cells, Mosses, Ferns, Infusoria, The Development of the Embryo*, and other subjects not only of teaching value but some constituting valuable research. They have made many others for the general public, the most popular of these being: *The Development of the Frog* (Dolin).

Darwinism

A series deals with various mammals, birds, insects and other animals: *Ammophila, The Ant-Amazon, Spiders* (Vinnitsky); *Winged Visitors* (Zguride), *The Island of White Birds* (Svetozarov), *Instinctive Behaviour in Animals* (Pavlov). An underlying theme of the scripts in all these is illustration of the basic principles of Darwinism. Among the films of this class, the biological films, a high place must be given to: *In the Depths of the Sea* (Zguride, scientific supervision by Prof. Lebedev).

Anatomical-Physiological films constitute another series: *Organs of Vision* (Shubin), *Experiments on the Circulation of the Blood* (Karin); *Breathing, the Digestive Organs*, and a special series of film lectures on the *Nervous System* (Galkin) are all devoted to portrayal of the complex processes that take place in living organisms.

Especial mention should be made of: *The Physiology and Pathology of the Higher Nervous System* (Gall), which acquaints the spectator with the classic experiments of Pavlov; and also of: *Interruption of the Heart Rhythm* (Bazykin), scientific supervision by Prof. Zelenin) which latter successfully employs combination of image and sound.

Surgical pictures occupy the leading place among medical-instructional films. We shall here mention only two: *The Principles of Simple Surgery* (Galkin, scientific supervision by Prof. Girgolau) and *Total Plastic Surgery of the Thorax*. A series of films on *Neuro-Surgery* has been produced under the scientific supervision of Academician Burdenko. Of films dealing with education in Hygiene more than 25 subjects have been produced.

Another series of films deals with technical processes, Stakhanovite methods of work, new scientific discoveries and inventions. There are some on Black Metallurgy (blast furnace methods, steel production, foundry methods); on Coloured Metallurgy (the obtaining of aluminium, copper, gold); on Machine-building (various types of lathes, the Fraser, turning,

Soviet Films

(Continued)

drilling); on fuels (oil, coal, peat); on the production of Textiles, Food, Wood, Glass, on Woodworking, on Constructional and Instrumental work, on Electrotechnics.

Films have been made for instructional training on Rail and Water Transport. Special mention is deserved by a *Course on the Motor Tractor*, produced under the scientific supervision of Academician Y. A. Chudakov, a Vice-President of the Academy of Sciences. In 1939 was issued a film entitled *Multilathe Work* (Antonov), designed to popularise the new methods of work of the Stakhanovites in Heavy Industry.

Among scientific teaching films, subjects dealing with socialised agriculture occupy an important place. Twenty-two films were made on material connected with the All-Russian Agricultural Exhibition. Some dealt with the discoveries of Academicians Lysenko, Tsitsin and other scientists; others with the Stakhanovite methods of Maria Demchenko, the beet grower, Yefremov, Pasha Angelina the tractor driver and other village Stakhanovites. A great popular success has been attained by *The Transformer of Nature* (Svetozarov), a film on the work of the famous plant-breeder Michurin.

Of Geographical films, both for school and wider audiences, should be noted pictures on the life and mode of living of the peoples of the North and those dwelling beside the Amur, the Yenisei, the Northern Dvina and the Volga. Special pictures have been devoted to the various constituent Union Republics, such as the Byelorussians, the Ukrainian, the Turkmenian, the Uzbek, the Kazakh.

Another special field is historical films, such as: *Relics of Borodino* (Dubinsky), *Lord Great Novgorod* (Rubinstein), etc. Under the supervision of Academician Grekov and Prof. Picheta, film reconstructions from the past of the Russian people have been made using paintings and historical relics.

The Architecture of Leningrad, *The Tretyakov Gallery* (Nikolai); *The Hermitage* (Presnyakov), *Pushkin's Handwriting* (Vladimirovsky) and many other subjects have been made to popularise cultural treasures or enlist interest in questions concerning them.

Big future tasks face the Scientific and Technical-instructional film in the Soviet Union—particularly, the raising of the technical quality of the pictures, improvement in the sound and more exact methods of shooting. But now, in 1940, we have a definite schedule of subjects worked out and an experienced skilled staff. We therefore hope to be able to fulfil the expectations entertained of us by the Party and the Government.

(NOTE 2.)

Films that have arrived in England since June 22nd, 1941, show two developments since the above chapter was written. First, a number of films in the last category—popularising cultural treasures—seem to be included in a *Soviet Art* series, issued by the Central Newsreel Studio. This may represent an organisational branching-off. Second, four numbers have come to England of a film-magazine, entitled *Science and Technique*, prepared under the scientific supervision of

Prof. Chudakov, issued monthly. Each is one reel and contains three subjects, popularising for general instruction well known scientific facts (the relation between breathing and blood), industrial processes (metallisation, the making of artificial precious stones, the building of the Palace of Soviets) new inventions or discoveries (a water-screen to protect furnace-workers, melon-pumpkin grafts, the twin-boat sea glider, Academician Kapitsa's miniature turbine for liquefying air, Academician Lena Stern's method of treatment of shock). One issue is specially designed for young children. The Kapitsa and Stern items have been prepared in English under the title *Two Discoveries*, the remainder as *Glimpses of Soviet Science*—the latter is to be publicly distributed by the Anglo-American Film Corporation. A remarkable two-reel film entitled *Experiments in the Revival of Organisms*, illustrating the work of Prof. Bryukhonenko on artificial circulations and made under his supervision, introduced in English by Professor J. B. S. Haldane, F.R.S., is issued by the Soviet Film Agency. All three of these films are obtainable on substandard from the Society for Cultural Relations.)

In the Nov.-Dec. issue of D.N.L. appeared a review of *Spring in the Farm*, a film of the Greenpark Unit. The cameraman responsible was Erwin Hillier, not Charles Marlborough, as we stated in the review.

New Documentary Films

(continued)

Malta G.C. Production: Army Film Unit, R.A.F. Film Unit and Crown Film Unit. **Commentator:** Lt. Lawrence Olivier, R.N.V.R. **Music:** Sir Arnold Bax, played by R.A.F. Orchestra. **Running Time:** 15 minutes. **M.O.I. Subject:** The story of Malta under fire.

Method of Treatment: This account is composed from official and newsreel material and deals with complete thoroughness—as far as visuals are concerned—with the price Malta has paid for remaining a firm bastion of our waning and waxing Mediterranean power. We see the convoys come in, the enemy planes swooping down, the bombs dropping and many scenes of damage, all too familiar in every theatre of war. The scenes in Malta differ from those in other countries only in the massive sun-drenched texture of the white stone debris.

There has clearly been little time or opportunity to make much of a job of the clearing up, and measures of relief have not been easy to extemporise. The extent of the damage is appalling and the fortitude of the inhabitants unquestionable. So much is well presented but scarcely new. The film in fact adds little to newsreel excitements already experienced other than a religious over-tone introduced no doubt with an eye to its effect in certain overseas countries. **Propaganda Value:** Malta obviously deserved a "we can take it" film if ever a place did. It is probably nobody's fault if this kind of tribute seems nowadays to be a bit dated.

★ For your information

IN every progressive enterprise there must be leaders and those who follow behind. As artistic and technical progress in cinematography quickens to the tempo and stimulus of war, "KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY" is always to be found "up-with-the-leaders", its well-informed pages radiating perception and far-sighted thinking. Kinematography's leaders themselves know this for truth and turn to "K.W." week by week for information and enlightenment.

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TO THE EDITOR,
Dear Sir,

I am not a documentary film maker or an editor of D.N.L. or even a Mass Observer, so perhaps I can support your attitude towards the National Savings films without being accused of spite, spleen and possible malice. Documentary has the important job of informing the public and of influencing their feelings about the war. The only justification of official films is that the audience leaves the cinema or the canteen with useful knowledge, or with an improved attitude towards the war. Personally I found the majority of Five Minute films were successful enough to be conversation-worthy afterwards. I had been impressed by the modern army building railways in Persia, or by an Indian factory, or by the drama of the great harvest. Most of these films stood thinking about afterwards, but I found the Savings films failed, the arguments put forward and the information given seemed trite, the message may have been good but the reasoning was not convincing. The blame, I imagine, lies deep, since most of the press appeals to save seem childish and unconvincing. It is hard to believe that every five thousand pounds invested in certificates means that one more fighter will be built that would not be built otherwise, or that the drive for savings is just a huge scramble among a lot of kids for good marks; while a large housewife labelled "Guerilla Fighter" makes me writhe with shame and take a sniff of fresh air. The films did not fail because of Merton Park Studios or Spectator Films, it was not because they were badly made; I can still remember vividly the chalked pavement and the tinkling barrel organ of "Down Our Street" and there were some undeniably lovely shots of aircraft flying in "Wings for Victory". But they did nothing to convince me of the importance or urgency of Savings Groups nor was the enthusiasm they aroused relevant. And if documentaries are produced at the expense of the nation and fail to do their job, however pleasantly they may pass the time, then surely it is the duty of D.N.L. to attack them. Otherwise the public and the ministries can use them to attack the Films Division and the documentary workers as a whole.

Yours faithfully,

R. H. B. MASON

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Documentary News Letter

stands for the use of film as a medium of propaganda and instruction in the interests of the people of Great Britain and the Empire and in the interests of common people all over the world.

Owned and published by

FILM CENTRE LTD.
34 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON W.1
GERRARD 4253

FILMS AND PEOPLE (U.S.A.)

(from Motion Picture Almanac)

DURING the past year, the outstanding documentary film of feature length appeared to be Robert Flaherty's *The Land*, produced for the Department of Agriculture.

Our Russian Front, a feature compilation of Russian newsreel and other clips, was an undertaking of editing and scoring in which Joris Ivens, Marcel Craven, Albert Naplas, and Elliott Paul participated.

Victor Stoloff's two-reel *Better Dresses—Fifth Floor* was acquired for Latin-American distribution by the Office of Inter-American Affairs, but not distributed.

Irving Jacoby finished the two-reel *High Over The Borders*, depicting the flight of birds across international boundaries in the Western Hemisphere, and hinting its symbolism for unity. This was prepared jointly for the inter-American department, the New York Zoological Society, and the National Film Board of Canada.

Documentary Film Productions completed *Here Is Tomorrow* for the Co-operative League of the U.S.A. in three reels. Principals in its manufacture were Willard Van Dyke and Herbert Kerkow, Roger Barlow and Irving Lerner.

In May, Frontier Films released its three-year-in-the-making feature, *Native Land*, on civil liberties and their absence, in this country. Paul Strand and Leo Hurwitz directed. National distribution was sought, after a New York premiere.

Robert Kissack, head of the Visual Education Department of the University of Minnesota, presented his feature-length documentary *Minnesota Document*.

Willard Van Dyke left New York for South America in late December, for a six-month tour sponsored by the Foreign Policy Association, the purpose of which was to gather material for a 30-minute film showing the economic basis for inter-continental trade.

Ben Kerner and Julian Roffman did a four-reel film *Around the World with Ocean Cargo*, for the Insurance Companies of North America.

William Wells Productions finished *Report to the People* for the National Association of Infantile Paralysis.

Julian Bryan continued his series of films, *Americans All*, for the Office of Inter-American Affairs.

Leo Seltzer and Elain Basil worked on *Public Health Service* for Eastman Kodak Company in April, 1942. Mr. Seltzer had completed films on war in the Atlantic, and on aviation maintenance—for the Canadian Film Board.

Irving Hartley, in April, 1942, was editing the feature made for Patino Mines in South America, into a two-reel subject for the Inter-American Office. He also was doing a film for the American Film Center, on housing management.

Bob Churchill's *Spare Time in the Army*, made for the U.S. Army Signal Corps, received a Broadway showing at the Criterion and distribution by Columbia.

Formed at the College of the City of New York during the winter of 1942-43 was the Institute of Film Techniques, with initial enrolment of 185. Among lecturers were Alice Keliher, Robert Flaherty, Stuart Legg, Joris Ivens, Irving Lerner, Richard Ford, Norbert Lusk, John Ferno, Hans Richter.

No. 9

THE MERCHANT AND HIS FRIEND



"A certain Merchant had once a great desire to make a long journey. Now in regard that he was not very wealthy, 'It is requisite,' said he to himself, 'that before my departure I should leave some part of my estate in the city, to the end that if I meet with ill luck in my travels, I may have wherewithal to keep me at my return.' To this purpose he delivered a great number of bars of iron, which were a principal part of his wealth, in trust to one of his friends, desiring him to keep them during his absence; and then, taking his leave, away he went. Some time after, having had but ill luck in his travels, he returned home; and the first thing he did was to go to his Friend, and demand his iron: but his Friend, who owed several sums of money, having sold the iron to pay his own debts, made him this answer: 'Truly, friend,' said he, 'I put your iron into a room that was close locked, imagining it would have been there as secure as my own gold; but an accident has happened which nobody could have suspected, for there was a rat in the room which ate it all up.'

"The Merchant, pretending ignorance, replied, 'It is a terrible misfortune to me indeed; but I know of old that rats love iron extremely; I have suffered by them many times before in the same manner, and therefore can the better bear my present affliction.' This answer extremely pleased the Friend, who was glad to hear the Merchant so well inclined to believe that a rat had eaten his iron; and to remove all suspicions, desired him to dine with him the next day. The Merchant promised he would, but in the meantime he met in the middle of the city one of his Friend's children; the child he carried home, and locked up in a room. The next day he went to his Friend, who seemed to be in great affliction, which he asked him the cause of, as if he had been perfectly ignorant of what had happened.

"O, my dear friend,' answered the other, 'I beg you to excuse me, if you do not see me so cheerful as otherwise I would be; I have lost one of my children; I have had him cried by sound of trumpet, but I know not what is become of him.'

"O' replied the Merchant, 'I am grieved to hear this; for yesterday in the evening, as I parted from hence, I saw an owl in the air with a child in his claws; but whether it were yours I cannot tell.'

"Why, you most foolish and absurd creature!' replied the Friend, 'are you not ashamed to tell such an egregious lie? An owl, that weighs at most not above two or three pounds, can he carry a boy that weighs above fifty?'

"Why,' replied the Merchant, 'do you make such a wonder at that? As if in a country where one rat can eat a hundred tons' weight of iron, it were such a wonder for an owl to carry a child that weighs not over fifty pounds in all!' The Friend, upon this, found that the Merchant was no such fool as he took him to be, begged his pardon for the cheat which he designed to have put upon him, restored him the value of his iron, and so had his son again."

REALIST FILM UNIT

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